

Regarding the Hadeeth about Losing Your Eyesight If You Look Up during Salah

by

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Argument:

We read in Saheeh Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 12, Hadith 717:

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

The Prophet said, "What is wrong with those people who look towards the sky during the prayer?" His talk grew stern while delivering this speech and he said, "**They should stop (looking towards the sky during the prayer); otherwise their eyesight would be taken away.**"

Why is looking toward the sky such a great sin worthy of such a punishment? Also, it has not been scientifically proven that people lose their eyesight after doing such a thing.

Response:

Looking toward the sky during prayer is sinful because it is displaying bad manners toward Allah, for one should humble himself by tilting his head in a form of submission,¹ and it also distorts the reality of ascribing Allah with the lofty position He is worthy of.² A few scholars opined that looking up toward the sky during Salah would nullify the Salah because it would result in diverting away from the Qiblah.³

As for this threat of punishment not being "scientifically proven," one should first ask how such a thing could be proven or disproven scientifically anyways. The hadith did not say that the taking away of the eyesight would necessarily be instant, and there is the possibility of someone repenting before Allah decides to inflict that person with this punishment. Someone may lose his

¹ Shaykh al-'Uthaymeen stated in his abridged commentary on *Buloogh al-Maram*:

هذه معصية منهي عنها والسبب في هذا انه سوء أدب مع الله تعالى لان المصلي ينبغي له أن يخضع ويظمن رأسه ولا يرفع بصره إلى السماء

² Mulla Ali Qari said in his commentary on *Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh*:

لأن ذلك يوهم نسبة العلو المكاني إلى الله تعالى تعالى الله عن ذلك علوا كبيرا

³ Shaykh al-'Uthaymeen remarked in his commentary on *Riyaadh us-Saaliheen* said:

إن الإنسان مأمور بأن يستقبل القبلة بجميع بدنه فإذا رفع بصره إلى السماء صار وجهه إلى السماء لا إلى القبلة فتبطل صلاته

eyesight several decades later after doing this act, and he might not be aware of the cause of his blindness.

One would also need to bear in mind that this punishment would not necessarily be inflicted upon someone who does it out of ignorance, for it was reported that even the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to look toward the sky during prayer before it was revealed to him that he should stop.⁴ So the question is: which Muslim nowadays would do this sin **knowingly** and persistently without the intention of repenting?

In conclusion, there is nothing unreasonable about the punishment prescribed for this act, nor could this hadith be rejected because it has supposedly been falsified scientifically.

⁴ This was reported by Ibn Sirin in *Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah*:

حدثنا هشيم عن ابن عون عن ابن سيرين قال : كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم مما ينظر إلى الشيء في الصلاة فيرفع بصره حتى نزلت آية إن لم تكن هذه فلا أدري ما هي الذين هم في صلاتهم خاشعون قال : فوضع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم رأسه.